

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 OMB-01 AID-05 PC-01 /064 W

-----016878 271705Z /44

R 271249Z DEC 77

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8305

INFO AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

AMEMBASSY DACCA

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY KABUL

AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU

AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMCONSUL MADRAS

CINCPAC

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, IN

SUBJECT: CONGRESS PARTY MOVES CLOSER TO A SPLIT

REF: NEW DELHI 18097, 18370

1. EVENTS OVER THE CHRISTMAS WEEKEND MOVED THE CONGRESS PARTY CLOSER TO AN OPEN BREAK, WHICH MIGHT OCCUR DURING PRESIDENT CARTER'S VISIT TO DELHI. IN A BOLD STRIKE AGAINST THE PRO-MRS. GANDHI FACTION, CONGRESS PRESIDENT BRAHMANANDA REDDY ON DECEMBER 26 SUSPENDED DEVRAJ URS, CHIEF MINISTER OF KARNATAKA AND LEADING FIGURE IN THE INDIRA CAMP, FROM THE PARTY FOR "CONTINUED ANTI-PARTY ACTIVITIES." THE SUSPENSION  
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FOLLOWED THE ANNOUNCEMENT BY MRS. GANDHI'S FORCES THAT THEY HAD ISSUED INVITATIONS TO SOME 2000 CONGRESS FIGURES TO ATTEND A "NATIONAL CONVENTION OF CONGRESSMEN" TO BE HELD IN DELHI JANUARY 1 AND 2. OBSERVERS HERE SAY THAT THIS "CONVENTION", OVER WHICH MRS. GANDHI HERSELF MAY PRESIDE, WOULD BE IN EFFECT A PARALLEL AICC MEETING WHICH WOULD CREATE A DE FACTO SPLIT IN THE PARTY.

2. THE SUSPENSION OF CHIEF MINISTER URS FROM THE CONGRESS COULD LEAD TO THE COLLAPSE OF HIS MINISTRY IN KARNATAKA. APPROXIMATELY 60-ODD ANTI-URS CONGRESS LEGISLATORS ARE REPORTEDLY ABOUT TO WITHDRAW THEIR SUPPORT TO HIS GOVERNMENT. SUCH AN ACTION WOULD LEAVE URS IN A MINORITY POSITION WHICH COULD REQUIRE THE IMPOSITION OF PRESIDENT'S RULE IN THE STATE.

3. BRAHMANANDA REDDY'S SUSPENSION OF URS FROM THE PARTY IS PROBABLY INTENDED AS A WARNING TO OTHER CONGRESSMEN THAT THEY WILL FACE SIMILAR DISCIPLINARY ACTION IF THEY ATTEND THE "CONVENTION". NEWS REPORTS FROM VARIOUS STATE CAPITALS DIFFER ON HOW MANY CONGRESSMEN MAY ATTEND THE JANUARY 1-2 MEETING, AND IT IS OBVIOUS THAT MANY ARE SITTING ON THE FENCE AT PRESENT WAITING TO SEE WHICH WAY THE WIND IS BLOWING. AN INDICATION OF THE RELATIVE STRENGTH OF THE TWO FACTIONS MAY COME ON DECEMBER 28 WHEN THE 21-MEMBER CONGRESS WORKING COMMITTEE WILL MEET TO CONSIDER THE LATEST DEVELOPMENTS. WE UNDERSTAND THAT ONLY FOUR OF THE WORKING COMMITTEE MEMBERS ARE SOLIDLY IN MRS. GANDHI'S CAMP, WITH MOST OF THE OTHERS LINED UP BEHIND REDDY AND PARLIAMENTARY PARTY LEADER CHAVAN.

4. MRS. GANDHI'S DECISION TO GO AHEAD WITH THE "CONVENTION" IS SEEN AS THE DECISIVE STEP TOWARD A FORMAL BREAK, LEADING TO THE CREATION OF HER OWN POLITICAL PARTY. FOR EXAMPLE, THE DECEMBER 27 "TIMES OF INDIA" HEADLINED ITS LEAD STORY WITH LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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"BATTLE OF THE CONGRESS BEGINS". SOME OBSERVERS HERE ARE ALSO SAYING THAT MRS. GANDHI DELIBERATELY TIMED THE HOLDING OF HER "CONVENTION" TO COINCIDE WITH PRESIDENT CARTER'S VISIT SO THAT SHE WILL GET MAXIMUM PRESS COVERAGE FROM THE WESTERN CORRESPONDENTS WHO WILL ACCOMPANY THE PRESIDENT. GOHEEN

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## Message Attributes

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**Review Markings:**  
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